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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify the organizational factors that aided or hindered the successful introduction of comprehensive planning systems in four selected school districts and to use that knowledge to develop a conceptual model to guide school districts in the successful introduction of systematic planning. A major focus of the study was to determine the extent and nature of intersystem interaction within each district among the superintendent-policy making subsystem, the administrative-supervisory subsystem, and the teacher-nonsupervisory subsystem. Data were collected through examination of project documents, preinterview questionnaires, and structured interviews with 59 persons involved with the planning systems under study. The authors describe in turn the general characteristics of the most successful and least successful districts and summarize their findings on the districts' inputs, processes, motivation levels, and success perceptions. The second half of the paper describes the conceptual model developed by the authors for introducing comprehensive planning systems. (Author/JG)

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INTRODUCING COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SYSTEMS IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEVELOPED FROM FOUR CASE STUDIES

Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association 1978 Annual Meeting, March 27-31, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

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INTRODUCING COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SYSTEMS IN SCHOOL DISTRICTS: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL DEVELOPED FROM FOUR CASE STUDIES[1]

An operational model for comprehensive planning in school districts was developed by representatives of the Western New York School Development Council and the Faculty of Educational Studies at the State University of New York at Buffalo.[2] The model was field-tested for two years in four pilot school districts in Western New York.

Purposes of Study

The research reported here had two major purposes: (1) to identify those organizational factors in the pilot school districts that promoted the successful introduction of comprehensive planning systems (and, conversely, to identify those that hindered success), and (2) to use this knowledge to develop a conceptual model that could be used to guide school districts in introducing planning systems.

Methodology

After reviewing relevant literature pertaining to systems, educational planning, and organizational change, we developed a conceptual framework and research questions to guide the study. We chose to view each pilot school district as an organization composed of three interrelated subsystems: (1) superintendent-policymaking, (2) administrative-supervisory, and (3) teacher-nonsupervisory. Power equalization models reviewed in the literature and fitted to those three subsystems prompted this general research question:

> Will a system whose subsystems receive, process and transmit information in a deliberative and collaborative[3] manner be more successful in introducing a comprehensive planning model than one whose subsystems do not interact in a deliberative and collaborative manner?

We specifically sought to determine the relationships between success in introducing the operational planning systems and (1) the frequency of deliberative-collaborative intersystem interactions; (2) the role performance of the superintendent, the project coordinator, and the outside consultant; (3) the knowledge of educational planning technology evidenced by the superintendent and by subsystem members; and (4) the degree of project-related goal congruence among the subsystems.

Data were collected by examining records that documented project activities, e.g. minutes of staff meetings held by the model-development team of consultants, correspondence between the consultants and the pilot school districts' staffs, consultants' logs, and school districts' Work Plans and Output Schedules that displayed progress on the project. Data were collected also by interviewing fifty-three subsystem members who actively participated in the pilot programs and the six members of the consultant staff. Their responses to items in a structured interview instrument were tape recorded. The interviews sought to learn the respondents' perceptions of each school district's processes for introducing comprehensive planning, including the extent to which deliberative-collaborative intersystem interaction occurred and the apparent effect that it had on the introductory process.

The data were analyzed using Stringer's inputs-processes-outputs technique[4] for categorizing organizational variables. This model relates organizational and individual outputs to motivation, which is influenced by perceived environmental conditions, i.e., the organizational climate. See Exhibit 1.

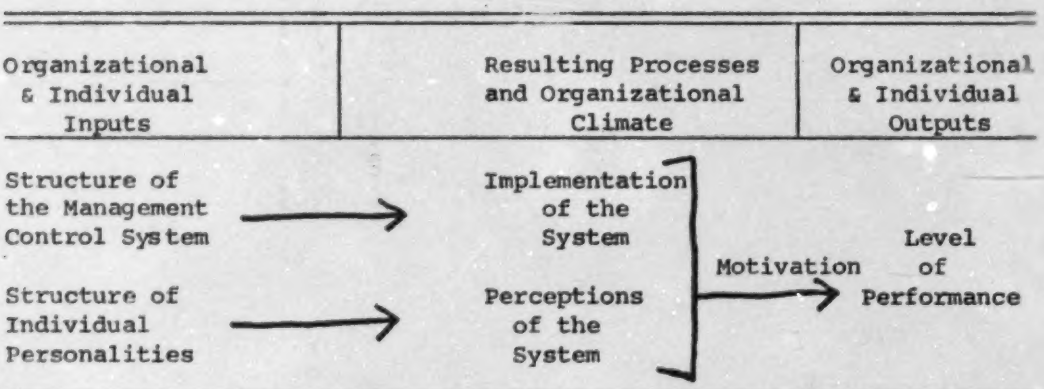


Exhibit 1. Framework for Categorizing Organizational Variables. (After Robert A. Stringer, Jr., "Achievement, Motivation and Management Control," Personnel Administration, November-December, 1966, p. 331.)

The successful introduction of a comprehensive planning system in each pilot school district was evaluated on three measures: (1) the school staff interviewees' perceptions of success, rated on a five-point scale; (2) the consultants' perceptions of school districts' successes, rated on the same scale; and (3) the percentage of planned tasks completed, derived from each district's project Work Plan and Output Schedule.

Selected Findings

The major findings concern the differences among the four school districts' inputs (structure for planning), processes (planning practices), and outputs (planning achievements). We describe here, for purposes of contrast, those organizational variables for two of the districts: District B which overall was judged to have been quite successful and District D which overall was judged to have been quite unsuccessful. The precise measurements of success will be reported below. (Districts A and C each were judged overall to have experienced average success.)

Characteristics of Most Successful District

We describe here the general characteristics of the "quite successful" District B, and summarize the findings on its planning project's inputs, processes, motivation level, and success perceptions.

General Characteristics. District B is rural-suburban, with 4400 pupils, and a full-valuation assessment of $20,500 per pupil. Both the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent came to the district shortly before the beginning of the project and they initiated it.

Inputs. In this most successful district the planning project's inputs included:

1. Active participation in the project by teachers,[5] administrators and the superintendent.

2. Direction of the project by a task force representing all three subsystems.

3. Coordination of the project by a high-ranking administrator, the Assistant Superintendent. He functioned as a link among the subsystems.

4. The use of an introductory work plan and schedule. It was district-wide in scope and was followed assiduously.

Processes. Successful processes included:

1. A high frequency of deliberative and collaborative intersystem interaction among teachers, administrators and the superintendent. The superintendent was perceived as a very active participant in the project; he chaired the task force.

2. The functioning of the consultant in the role of advisor to the project team. The consultant was not perceived as a director. Staff members looked to their own leadership for the active direction of the project.

3. The flow of introductory tasks from the widely representative task force to subsystem members, who considered the tasks to be quite relevant to their planning needs.

4. Effective performances by the superintendent and project coordinator (assistant superintendent). Both were viewed as influential because of their visible commitment, their knowledge of planning technology, and their use of open-system processes for generating a positive organizational climate for innovation. The project coordinator was perceived as being quite successful in keeping the project moving, resolving conflict, influencing the superintendent, and serving as a resource person.

Motivation. The level of motivation was high. The interviewees perceived a high degree of goal congruence among the members of the subsystems as to the reasons for introducing systematic-planning in their school district. Moreover, the interviewees in the three subsystems expressed a desire to be involved in the project, helped to develop the introductory plan, and were 100 percent in agreement with the plan.

Output. The level of output was high. District B was judged to have realized 80 percent of its introductory Work Plan of forty-one scheduled tasks. They emphasized the training of staff members in systematic planning, the documentation of plans developed, and systems analyses of several work areas where problems had been identified. Thirty-two tasks were completed; five tasks were partially completed; and four scheduled tasks, all having to do with building needs forecasting, were not started.

Success Perceptions. The interviewees rated themselves quite successful, or 4.1 out of 5, in introducing systematic planning. The

ratings given by each subsystem were: Superintendent Subsystem 4.0; Administrator Subsystem 4.25; Teacher Subsystem 4.0. The project consultants also rated this district quite successful, or 4.7 on a 5.0 scale.

Characteristics of Least Successful District

We describe next the general characteristics of the "quite unsuccessful" District D and summarize the findings on its planning project's inputs, processes, motivation level, and success perceptions.

General Characteristics. District D is a lower-middle-class, blue collar community, with 7800 pupils, and a full-valuation assessment of $19,100 per pupil. When the project began, the superintendent had been with the district for twenty years, and the assistant superintendent had been on the staff for ten years. The superintendent consented to the project when a local educational consortium asked that the district be a pilot.

Inputs. In this least successful district, the planning project inputs included only:

1. The existence of, but ineffectual functioning of, a tardily organized task force. It consisted of the administrative assistant to the superintendent, the assistant superintendent, and several teachers and administrators. The task force virtually ceased to function during the second year.

2. Coordination of the project by a relatively low-ranking official, the new administrative assistant to the superintendent. He functioned only as a link to the teachers in the one department that participated in the project, a small department that he supervised.

Virtually absent was the active participation of the superintendent

and assistant superintendent. No teachers and administrators outside the one participating department took part in the systematic-planning project. No introductory Work Plan and Schedule was developed.

Processes. There were marked contrasts between the processes of Districts B and D. Systemwide in District D there was a low frequency of deliberative and collaborative intersystem interaction. Pervasive throughout the school system during the two years of the project was the feeling among staff members that the planning system was being thrust upon them from the central office without their initial involvement and without adequate information on the nature and purposes of the project. Consequently, the teachers and administrators evinced hostility toward the project, leading to intersystem interactions that at times were heated, with tempers flaring.

Motivation. The level of motivation was low. The Task Force met only sporadically, lacked leadership, and failed to make significant progress. The superintendent told the task force that he was not very familiar with systematic planning systems and would like to know more about planning technology. The task force tended to expect the project consultants to supply active direction instead of looking to their own leadership.

Output. The level of output was low. The only project activity planned and accomplished was a systems analysis in one small instructional department that was under pressure from the board of education to be reviewed. The members of that department learned systems analysis techniques and produced written departmental objectives. The district's coordinator for the planning project was also the head of this instructional group and was judged to have been influential with those immediate colleagues in introducing systematic planning in his unit of the

school system. In contrast to the three other districts, as mentioned, no Work Plan and Output Schedule was developed in District D, so no measurement of completion can be reported. (Districts A and C experienced 40% and 37% completion, respectively.)

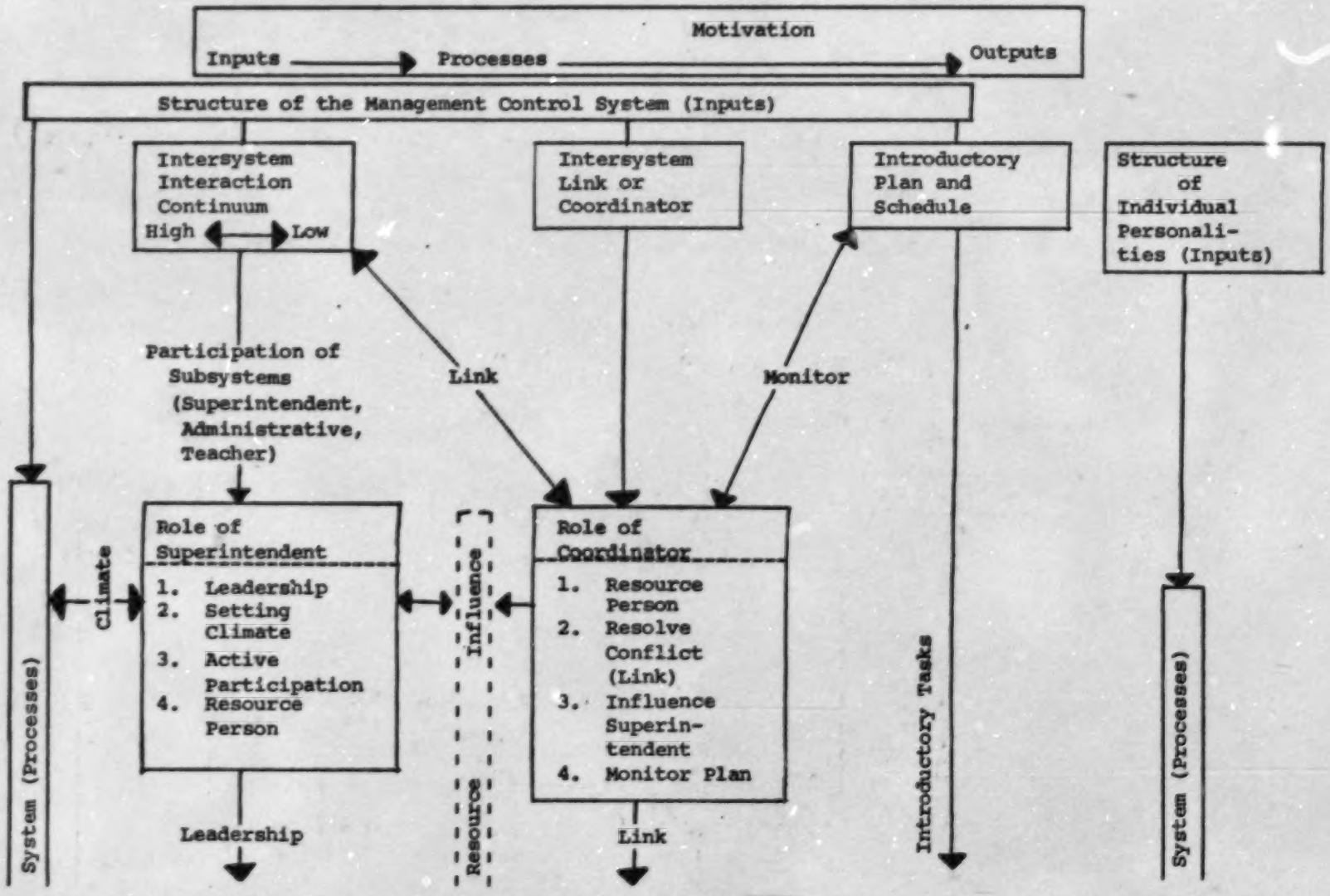
Success Perceptions. The few people who were involved in this narrowly focused systematic planning project rated themselves as having high average success, or 3.2 out of 5. The ratings given by each subsystem were: Superintendent Subsystem 3.0; Administrative Subsystem no ratings (its members did not participate and were not surveyed); Teacher Subsystem 3.5. The project consultants rated the district as a whole quite unsuccessful, or 1.8 on a 5.0 scale.

A Conceptual Model for Introducing Comprehensive Planning Systems

Knowledge of the organizational factors that either fostered the successful introduction of systematic planning practices or hindered their adoption, as observed in this study, was used to develop a conceptual framework for introducing organizational change. The proposed model is presented in Exhibit 2. It arranges change concepts into a systemic structure for initiating comprehensive planning systems in school districts.[6] Specified inputs and processes lead to frequent deliberative and collaborative intersystem interaction. Those interactions result in goal congruence, motivation, and high levels of performance. We describe below details of the model's inputs, processes and outputs.

Inputs

The inputs to the system for introducing comprehensive school district planning are the structure of the management control system and the structure of individual personalities. The latter is unknown, but


Motivation
Inputs
Processes
Outputs
Structure of the Management Control System (Inputs)
Intersystem Interaction Continuum
High
Low
Intersystem Link or Coordinator
Introductory Plan and Schedule
Structure of Individual Personalities (Inputs)
Participation of Subsystems (Superintendent, Administrative, Teacher)
Link
Monitor
System (Processes)
Climate
Role of Superintendent
1. Leadership
2. Setting Climate
3. Active Participation
4. Resource Person
Leadership
Influence
Resource
Role of Coordinator
1. Resource Person
2. Resolve Conflict (Link)
3. Influence Superintendent
4. Monitor Plan
Link
Introductory Tasks
System (Processes)

11

12

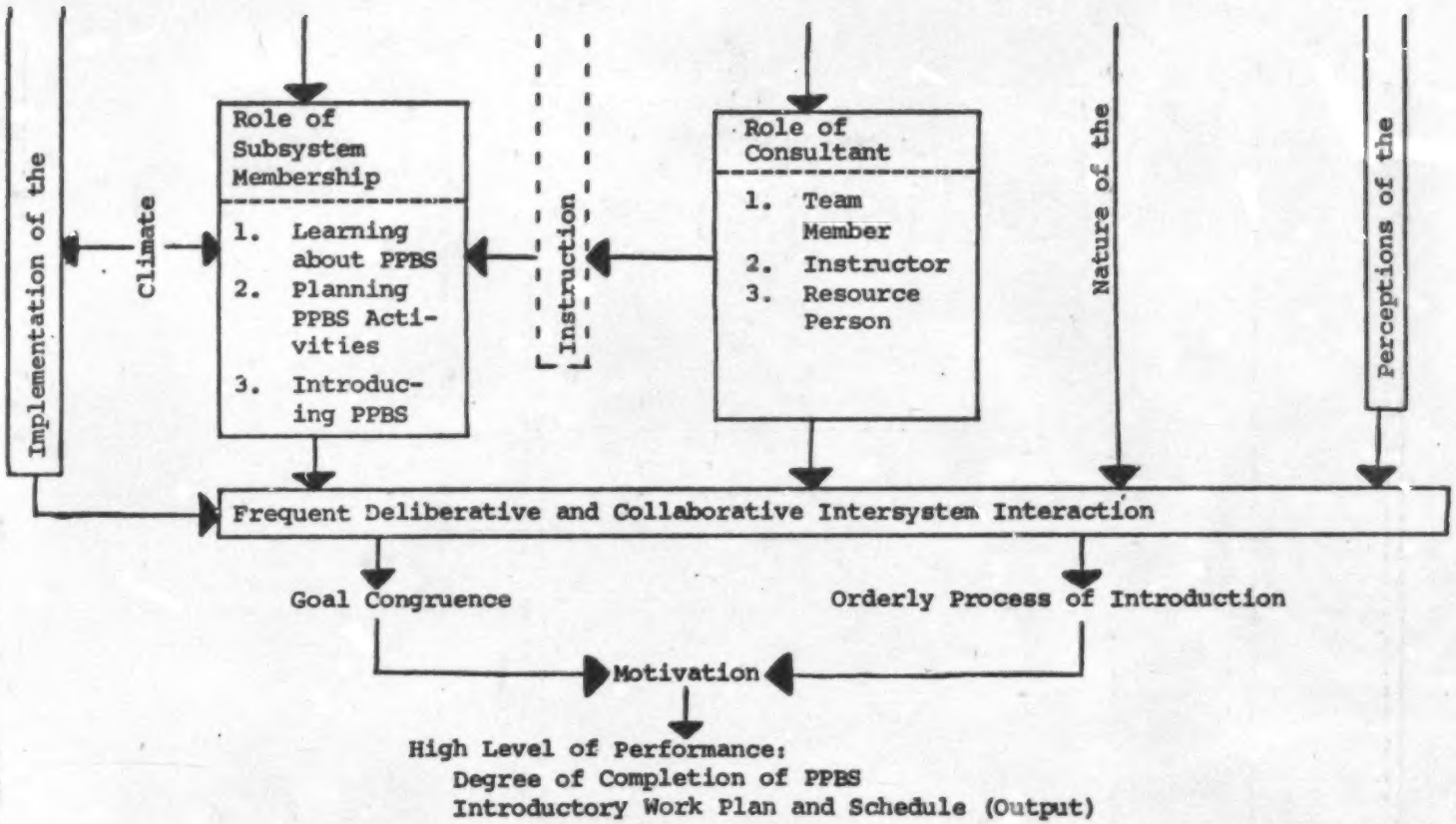


Exhibit 2. Conceptual Model for Introducing Comprehensive Planning Systems in School Districts.

the former can be designed. Three key elements of the structure of the management control system are the intersystem interaction continuum, the intersystem link or coordinator, and the introductory plan and schedule.

The model postulates certain characteristics of a school district that is successful in introducing systematic planning. The successful district will organize its planning project in ways that will promote a high degree of deliberative and collaborative interaction among the superintendent, administrative and teacher subsystems. The anticipated results of these synergistic collaborations are participative decision making, effective communications, and goal congruence among the subsystems.

The project's intersystem link, or coordinator, should be a high level administrator who is perceived as having power and influence. This role might be performed by the superintendent, the deputy superintendent or an assistant superintendent. The coordinator functions as a link among the subsystems and to the outside consultant group. He should be one of the most knowledgeable persons in the school district concerning the innovation.

An introductory work plan and schedule are necessary. Subsystem members need to be able to relate to this plan and to measure the success of the introductory process against the plan. They should provide input to the development of the introductory plan; its adoption should be the result of deliberative and collaborative intersystem interaction. The establishment of a Work Plan and Output Schedule implies that district resources will be committed to achieve the objectives of the plan. The resources may be finances for materials and consultants, released time for staff, and extra pay for extra duty. The staff members may be called upon, or volunteer, to work extra hours without pay, be released from

classroom assignments in order to participate in meetings, and spend personal time learning planning technology.

Processes

The key processes postulated are 1) the role performances of the superintendent, the project coordinator, the consultant, and the subsystem members; 2) deliberative and collaborative intersystem interactions; and 3) the performance of planned and scheduled introductory tasks.

The major attributes associated with the ideal role of the superintendent are leadership, visible support for the project, the ability to set an organizational climate conducive to the program, a willingness to understand and share knowledge of planning technology, and continuing commitment as a member of the task force.

The coordinator's ideal role is characterized by contributions as a resource person, a moderator of conflict, an influencer of the superintendent, and a monitor of progress.

The consultant's role is to instruct the district's staff members in the specific planning technology to be used, and to serve in an advisory capacity as a member of the project team. He must resist assuming active direction of the project, leaving that function to the district's leaders.

The ideal roles of other subsystem members--administrators and teachers--are to learn the required planning technology, actively contribute to the development of their district's planning system, and use the planning technology in their work activities. The results should include an increased sense of power over their work destinies and a perception of systematic planning as a "tool" to help them make better use of their resources.

Our model further suggests that the frequency of deliberative and collaborative interaction among the three subsystems is a strong factor in the success or lack of success in introducing a comprehensive planning system. Frequent interactions can produce a climate of trust and collaboration that results in goal congruence, orderly processes and high motivation.

The tasks for introducing systematic planning practices should be perceived as clearly relevant to that mission, with a straight-line relationship between action and results. Subsystem members should be helped to see the constructive relationship between their regular work and this innovation. If they see the tasks associated with this innovation as something in addition to their other tasks, it may be difficult for them to accept the extra work associated with the innovation. All of the introductory tasks should be specified in a Work Plan and Output Schedule which is closely monitored.

Outputs

The model postulates, finally, that the inputs and processes will lead to a high level of performance, measured by the degree to which the specified tasks in the Work Plan and Output Schedule for introducing a comprehensive planning system are accomplished. Concomitant outputs may include perceptions by involved staff members of a larger role in decision-making, greater power equalization, and an increased sense of professionalism.

Conclusions

The model presented furnishes an outline of concepts that need to be considered when introducing comprehensive planning systems into schools. Its structure was developed from the research evidence produced in case studies of four school districts. This framework promises utility in several ways.

First, the model presents a systems view for introducing organizational change. An holistic approach is emphasized. The situation has primacy; if a study of the situation reveals that the elements of the model cannot be implemented, then perhaps the innovation should not be attempted. The input-output nature of the model is results-oriented. It helps the change agent to focus on the flow of activities required to successfully introduce a planning system. Moreover, the systems nature of the model helps the change-agent to understand the interrelationships among the elements of the model.

Second, the model may have implications for the introduction of other types of innovations in schools. It also may have implications for the introduction of innovations in other types of organizations.

Third, the model may be helpful in formulating a normative theory for the introduction of change in organizations. This theory would have a systems base and might be expressed in terms of input-process-output relationships.

Footnotes

[1]The research reported here is summarized from Sheldon King, "A Conceptual Model for Introducing Planning-Programming-Budgeting Systems in School Districts: Developed from a Case Study of the Process of Introduction in Four Western New York School Districts" (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1975). University Microfilm Order No. 76-1454, 597 pages.

[2]This work is reported in detail in Chester Kiser and others, An Operational Model for the Application of Planning-Programming-Budgeting Systems in Local School Districts, Pre-Pilot Test Version (Williamsville, N.Y., The Western New York School Development Council, 1970). A Post-Pilot Test Version was published in 1972 by the Board of Cooperative Educational Services No. 1, Erie County, Buffalo, N.Y.

[3]Deliberative and collaborative intersystem interaction occurs when systems or subsystems join together in a manner that fosters information exchange and affords each participating system or subsystem equal opportunity to influence the others. Reference: Alfred T. Lederman, A Case Study of the Intersystem Interaction Between an Urban Board of Education and Selected Leaders of the Black Community (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1970), p. 5.

[4]Robert A. Stringer, Jr., "Achievement, Motivation and Management Control," Personnel Administration, November - December 1966, p. 331. Also in Gene W. Dalton and Paul R. Lawrence, Motivation and Control in Organizations (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc. and the Dorsey Press, 1971), pp. 329-336.

[5]Before the project began, the Superintendent obtained from the teachers' union president, an agreement to cooperate on the thrust of the planned innovation.

[6]In the model, the term PPBS refers to the Planning-Programming-Budgeting System, a particular type of comprehensive planning system that was used by the four school districts in this study.